

WATERSHED LESSON #2:

Good Leaders are Committed and Empower Others

Leadership is a critical factor in making the watershed approach work. Watersheds can be large or small, urban or rural, degraded or pristine. They can have resources of local or national importance, and they can have little or great development pressure on them. Government may be trusted and relied upon or distrusted and feared. Likewise, the leader that emerges in any given watershed varies. He or she can be a farmer or rancher, coal miner, nonprofit organization member, local council person, or a government person from the state, tribal or federal level. Or, leadership can come in the form of a group or entity, such as a local board, State agency, or the Federal government. Essentially, leaders are individuals or groups who care about the watershed and its future.

As for common characteristics of successful watershed leaders, they tend to reflect the values of the community and to know what works there. They generally are good communicators, have the ability to bring about change and set things in motion, and are committed to making their (or a group's) vision a reality. They also tend to know how to engage, respect, and empower others and are able to find new or leverage existing resources.

Because leadership is so important, many seek to encourage and nurture it. Some states offer grants to budding watershed associations. Several nonprofits maintain lists of watershed leaders who are willing to talk to others about their success. Other groups offer training and leadership workshops.

Napa County Conservation District

How You Get There is Flexible

**“A Great Leader is One Whose Followers Say:
‘We Did It Ourselves’.” - Lao-tzu**

Dennis Bowker, Resource Conservationist for the Napa County Resource Conservation District (RCD), has worked with several groups in the Napa River Watershed community to address environmental and economic concerns. These groups have been instrumental in working together to develop and implement a management plan for the watershed called the *Napa River Watershed Owner's Manual*. Dennis' experience in Napa, as well as with other watershed groups around the country, has reinforced the value of leadership emerging from and driven by the ideas of a community, rather than from any one individual. This view is quite different from the traditional one in which an expert figures out what is needed and then leads the troops. Ideas, developed and embraced by the community are not personality dependent and do not collapse with the departure of an

individual. Different people are active at different times and use these community-driven goals to motivate, but the mutual overall effort remains paramount.

Dennis has found in working with community groups that focusing on improving environmental conditions and developing inclusive common goals, rather than on implementing policies and regulations has been vital to the implementation of management activities and the success of community-based efforts. This reinforces the community role. While subtle, it is an important difference that can lead to more effective partnerships. Individuals can work on the environment and can promote the development of common strategies without demanding common values. In fact, involving people with different values in working on a common strategy to implement those values reinforces the benefits of considering different perspectives and value systems from the beginning.

Examples in the Napa Watershed that demonstrate the value of this approach include:

- *The Conservation Regulations Community Task Force* prepared an ordinance that requires an erosion control and water protection plan for all development on slopes exceeding five percent. This was in response to an erosion incident that caused a large amount of sediment to enter a local city water supply. The ordinance does not require implementation of a specific set of best management practices, but instead simply requires that the project prevent erosion and protect water quality, with professional review of the plans before permit issuance. The participation of the entire community in the watershed management effort is further demonstrated by the passage in 1996 of a county-wide parcel tax earmarked exclusively for watershed management.
- *The Napa Community Coalition for a Flood Plain Management Plan* arose to take a major role in redefining an often-rejected plan by the Corps of Engineers first proposed over 30 years ago. The Community Coalition stepped forward to take leadership of the project, and turned it from a Corps of Engineers Project to a Napa Community Project with Corps participation as a partner. The Community assumed leadership of the effort in order to clearly state their desire for a living river with ecologically sound methods to address flooding, and participated aggressively in the design of a new program that better addresses community interests in accomplishing flood threat reduction, while maintaining close partnership with the Corps of Engineers.
- *The Napa Sustainable Wine Growing Group* is working to establish voluntary farm management guidelines to ensure that world quality wine will still be made commercially in the Napa Valley 200 years from now. A diverse group of commercial grape growers, agency employees, and university representatives are donating their time to develop a training and assistance program to promote environmentally sound long term farm management that will support community

environmental and public health interests while also developing profitable farm operations.

So where did this philosophy or approach come from? Dennis says this approach is a shift from hierarchical management to more horizontal, network-based management, used in evolutionary biology and in business. The approach increases the emphasis on desired outcomes and measured results in terms of environmental improvement, rather than on adherence to rules or to methods chosen to reach those outcomes. In watershed management, the focus becomes the watershed resource, not the policy meant to protect the resource. The purpose of the effort - environmental improvement - is paramount; how you get there is fluid and flexible.

For more information: contact Dennis Bowker, Napa County Resource Conservation District, 707-252-4188, 707-252-4219 (fax) 102223.2012@compuserve.com. See Key Contacts and Resources in this lesson for more information on his stewardship guide.

Adams County, PA Conservation District

Where Locals Guide the Action

***-expected savings in total nitrogen, alone,
amount to over 150,000 pounds***

The Adams County Conservation District has acted as one of 37 “local arms” for the State of Pennsylvania, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which is trying to reduce nitrogen loads in the Chesapeake Bay watershed by empowering local communities. Largely due to the Conservation District’s leadership, more than 60 Adams County farmers now participate in a program which pays up to 80 percent of the costs (not to exceed \$30,000) of installing best management practices (BMPs) for controlling nutrient problems from erosion, barnyard runoff, and excess manure.

A secret to the District’s success is that it has sought and followed the advice of its board which is comprised of people from the area. The board members are the community leaders who understand how the District might be able to get community landowners to participate. The District has used twilight meetings, farm open houses, news releases, and public speaking engagements to reach farmers. Thus far, they have allocated over \$1 million for the installation of BMPs by Adams County farmers, and the results have been more than gratifying---expected savings in total nitrogen, alone, amount to over 150,000 pounds over the life of the program. Funding for the program comes largely from EPA and the Pennsylvania DEP.

In terms of lessons learned, Larry Martick of the District, explains that he has learned that landowners care about local water quality conservation, and, to the extent he talks about that, it helps to sell the program.

For more information: contact Larry Martick, Adams County Conservation District, 717-334-0636, 717-334-5999 (fax), adams.conservation@al.dep.state.pa.45

Massachusetts

Where Community Teams Make the Decisions

In Massachusetts, there have been leaders on many different levels. For example, Trudy Coxe, Secretary, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, at the State level, has been instrumental in ushering in fundamental changes in the way the State manages its water resources, aligning it around watersheds. She says that “government’s job is to serve the watershed.” And she means it. Ed Himlan, who had been a leader in an individual watershed, is now with the statewide coalition of watershed organizations. This coalition is working in concert with state and federal agencies to forge partnerships among government, business, civic, and environmental interests to enable sustainable watershed communities. Through this approach, decisions by informed individuals, organizations, and communities guide the application of local, state, and federal resources for ecosystem protection and management projects. Watershed Community Councils, designed as multi-interest, multi-stakeholder forums, are being established to serve a leadership role. They will provide a local voice for management of the watershed through consensus-based decision-making and priority setting.

This local-state integration is a key to the future success of management by watersheds, and it takes leadership to make it occur. Massachusetts is far along in the effort. A recent assessment by the Park Service and the Appalachian Mountain Club of New York and the New England States compared the number of groups dedicated primarily to river and watershed conservation. Not surprisingly, Massachusetts had the largest number. Citizen watershed associations have formed in almost all of Massachusetts’ 28 major watershed basins, and more than 500 citizen groups are active in the Commonwealth, counting lake and pond groups, water monitoring projects, land trusts, sportsmen groups, and others.

For more information: contact Ed Himlan, Massachusetts Watershed Coalition, 508-534-0379, 508-534-1329 (fax) or the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Watershed Initiative, 617-727-9800, x 227.

Key Contacts and Resources

YOUTH LEADER GUIDES AND TRAINING

- ***Give Water A Hand***, handbook on how to be a good leader and what makes water protection work. Helpful tool for watershed coordinators. University of Wisconsin, 216 Agriculture Hall, 1450 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706, (608) 262-2031 fax, erc@uwex.edu, 1-800-WATER20, <http://www.uwex.edu/erc>, Elaine Andrews, 608-262-0142.

- **Watershed Leadership Institute**, a program that Adopt-A-Watershed has developed to train local leaders on their curriculum. They have found that local leaders are critical to making watershed education happen in schools and act not only as leaders but as ambassadors, consultants and facilitators. P.O. Box 1850, Hayfork, CA 96041-1850, 916-628-5334, 916-628-4212 (fax). www.tcoe.trinity.k12.ca.us/aaw/adopt.html.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

- **Land Stewardship Watershed Plan Development: Cooperative Voluntary Natural Resource Protection, Enhancement and Management**, Dennis Bowker, NAPA County Resource Conservation District, 1303 Jefferson Street, Suite 500B, NAPA, California, 94559, 707-252-4188, 707-252-4219 (fax), 102223.2012@compuserv.com
- **Observations for Fostering Grass Roots Leadership in Your Watershed Program** short piece developed by Dennis Hall - (see Appendix 1). Operation Future Association (OFA), Big Darby Creek, County Extension Agent, Ohio State University Extension, Columbus, OH, 937-644-3162, hall.16@osu.edu. OFA takes farmers, developers and others on canoe trips that serve to inspire and nurture leadership. Started small, but it is now a flourishing nonprofit with 100+ members.

STATE AND REGIONAL NETWORKING MODELS

- **West Virginia Leadership Workshops**. West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection has held workshops where leaders of inclusive, consensus-based watershed associations gather to exchange information and inspire and challenge each other. In addition, the State has a new small grants program to nurture budding associations. In the first cycle, 19 \$5,000 grants were awarded. Contact: George Constantz, West Virginia DEP, 304-856-3911, 304-856-3889 (fax).
- **Watershed Progress: Massachusetts' Approach**, US EPA Publication EPA840-F-96-004, describes how the watershed approach is making a difference in Massachusetts, call 800-490-9198 for a copy.
- **Chesapeake Bay Communities: Making the Connection, A Catalog of Local Initiatives to Protect and Restore the Chesapeake Bay Watershed**. US EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, EPA 903-R-95-108, April 1996. Describes local efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay. 1-800-YOURBAY and press "1".

NATIONAL NETWORKING LISTS

- **River Network Watershed National Leaders List** - key network point for watershed leaders <http://www.teleport.com/~rivernet/rivernet/leader2.htm>
- **National Watershed Network** makes it easy for coordinators to network with each other. kyw@ctic.purdue.edu, <http://ctic.purdue.edu/KYW/KYW.html> In addition, they have a guide called **Leading and Communicating** that discusses the traits of effective leaders.

NATIONAL AND STATE LEADERSHIP

- **Watershed Approach Framework**, EPA 840-S-96-001, <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/framework.html>, describes what EPA means by the watershed approach. **Watershed Protection: A Statewide Approach**, describes the benefits of a rotating watershed approach, EPA841-R-95-004, <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/state/> Call 1-800-490-9198 for a free copy.
- **Developing Leadership**, Spring 1996, article on leadership by Abby Markowitz, *Volunteer Monitor*, <http://www.epa.gov/volunteer/spring96/proman16.html> or contact

Eleanor Ely, Editor, *The Volunteer Monitor*, 1318 Masonic Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94117 for a copy. Please send a self-addressed stamped envelope.

- ***Watershed Management: Toward Local Initiative in Solving Water Problems*** and ***Watershed Legislation: What Works and Why***, useful brochures analyzing the role of State legislatures in watershed protection. National Conference of State Legislatures, 1560 Broadway, Suite 700, Denver, CO, 80202, 303-830-2200, larry.morandi@ncsl.org. Larry Morandi.